

## 6.1: 1) Nouns and adjectives: agreement

### 2) Attributive and predicative position of noun modifiers

1) Having encountered now nouns of the three genders, and knowing that adjectives must agree with the nouns to which they refer, it would be reasonable to wonder how far the adjective can go in mimicking the noun's accidents. How do we choose the form of the adjective when it belongs to a different declension than the noun? The answer is simple, and it is valid for all Greek nouns and adjectives. Adjectives must represent the number, gender, and case of the noun, but their endings will not necessarily be the same. Each adjective takes the endings of its own declension. So, e.g., if we want to say "young sailor," using the noun of the first declension ὁ ναύτης, ου, we choose the masculine (underscored) of the adjective νέος, νέα, νέον, even though the masculine of Type I adjectives is a form of the second declension.

**EXAMPLES:** (the adjective does not always precede the noun, as in English)

*Adjective and noun take the same endings:*

λόγος	ὀρθός	right (correct) argument
noun	adj	

νέον	ἱερόν	new temple
adj	noun	

καλή	κόρη	pretty girl
adj	noun	

*Adjective and noun take different endings:*

νέος μαθητής new student (masculine adjective of the 2nd declension + masculine noun of the 1st declension)

νεανίας κακός bad youngster (masculine noun of the 1st declension + masculine adjective of the 2nd declension)

ἡ μακρὰ ὁδός<sup>1</sup> the long road / journey (feminine adjective of the 1st declension + feminine noun of the 2nd declension)

δεινὴ νόσος<sup>1</sup> a terrible disease (feminine adjective of the 1st declension + feminine noun of the 2nd declension)

**Note 1:** A few nouns of the 2nd declension ending in -ΟΣ are feminine, against the normal distribution of genders, e.g. ἡ ὁδός, οὗ (road, journey), ἡ νόσος, οὗ (disease).

*Attributive and predicative position of noun modifiers*

2) I begin with an explanation concerning the Greek article. Its forms are easy to remember since they resemble the endings of the first and second declensions. It is also intuitively simple to decide when to translate it and when to omit it in English: one should follow the tendencies of one's own language, which do not always resemble those of Greek. For example, proper names very often take the article in Greek, but not in English, so ἡ Μαρία = Mary.

*When the article is expressed with a noun modified by, e.g., an adjective, the article has an important function. It defines whether the adjective or another modifier is in the attributive or in the predicative position.*

I explain how to recognize the two positions and then show how to translate each.

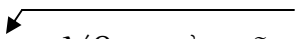
a1) A noun modifier is in the *attributive position* if it is placed next to the article: ο κακός νεανίας, ἡ καλὴ κόρη, τὸ νέον ἱερόν. In these examples the adjective is between article and noun. This is called the *first attributive position*.

In the attributive position, an adjective does not by itself make a statement: we translate the examples above as "the bad youngster...," "the pretty girl...," "the new temple...".

Often a prepositional phrase, an adverb, etc., are placed in the attributive position. English parallels this construction in some idiomatic combinations (e.g. "the now generation," "an out-of-state student").

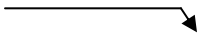
Consider the different meaning of:

οἱ νεανῖαι βάλλουσι λίθους ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ



The youngsters throw rocks in the house. (The prepositional phrase modifies the verb.) and

οἱ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ νεανῖαι βάλλουσι λίθους.



The youngsters in the house throw rocks. (i.e. only those in the house are guilty, others do not throw rocks: the prepositional phrase modifies the noun. We could say "the inside youths.")

a2) In the *second attributive position* the article follows, and is often repeated, after the noun: ὁ νεανίας ὁ κακός, ἡ κόρη ἡ καλή, τὸ ἱερόν τὸ νέον. The translations are again "the bad youngster...," "the pretty girl...," "the new temple...". No statement is made.

b) When the adjective (or another modifier) is not accompanied by the article, it is in the *predicative position*: ὁ νεανίας κακός, ἡ κόρη καλή, τὸ ἱερόν νέον.

In [1.2](#) we started translating adjectives in the predicative position, explaining that the verb *to be* should be supplied. The examples in b) are statements: "The young man is bad.", "The girl is beautiful.", "The temple is new."

Other nuances in the interpretation of the predicative position are best learned in the practice of translation.

**The GENITIVE modifying a noun may take the attributive or the predicative position with very much the same meaning**